

Township seeks feedback on wharf development

By **Blake McKim**
Journal Staff Writer

SPENCERVILLE - The public is being invited to come to a meeting and offer their comments on the wharf reconstruction at the Port of Prescott.

This meeting is set for South Edwardsburgh Community Centre for next Wednesday, July 7 from 5 to 9 pm. Councillor Pat Sayeau referred to the meeting as an open house where attendees can get more information about the port reconstruction and also offer their opinion on the project.

Sayeau spoke about the open house at last Tuesday's regular council meeting.

The reason the public meeting is being held is because the ministry of the environment (MOE) has not yet said definitively to the township whether or not an environmental assessment (EA) will be required in order for the \$35-million wharf project to go ahead. An environmental assessment could substantially hold up the project.

The township has submitted a declaration order to the MOE in hopes the ministry will indicate an environmental assessment is not needed for the project. This order was posted on the ministry's web site on June 3; the public has 45 days to comment on the order.

The township received funding approval for the wharf work at the port last year. However, it cannot begin until the MOE authorizes the project to go ahead.

Among the materials for the public to access at the open house will be environmental studies which have been completed by Port of Prescott, South Nation Conservation and the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne. The studies indicate that the proposed wharf reconstruction at the port will not harm the environment.

Sayeau noted feedback at the meeting will be collected by South Nation Conservation and will be included in a report the authority will present to the MOE.

Minister visits port

Councillor Sayeau reported an impromptu visit by Environment Minister John Gerretsen to the port on June 14 seemed to go very well.

Councillor Lawrence Levere commented the township received only about a day's notice that the minister would be travelling through Eastern Ontario and could make a brief stop at the port.

Levere added Gerretsen was shown the existing wharf and taken through the reconstruction area by the project manager. Others involved with the project (including representatives from South Nation Conservation and port staff) were also on hand to answer any questions.

"He (Gerretsen) received a full briefing," on the project, Sayeau added. The councillor also said Gerretsen told him he came away from the meeting with a "much better understanding" of the wharf reconstruction project.

The *Journal* was not given advance notice of the minister's visit.